

**SALES TAX FOCUS GROUP MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 25, 2019, 3:00 P.M.
18500 MURDOCK CIRCLE, ROOM B106
PORT CHARLOTTE, FL 33948**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Patricia Aho, Donna Barrett, James Coalwell, Steve Dionisio, Shaune Freeland, Jason Green, Lynne Matthews, Danny Nix, Kathi Obendorfer, Sylvia Orr, Brian Presley, Todd Rebol, Bill Schafer, Steve Uebelacker, Steve Vieira, John Wright

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Ed Hill, Robin Madden, Gordon “Mac” Martin, James Parish, Tom Rice

OTHERS PRESENT: Hector Flores, Deputy County Administrator
Roger Warner, Facilities Manager
Travis Mortimer, Assistant County Administrator
Carrie Walsh, Human Services Director

OPENING STATEMENTS

Mr. Hector Flores, Deputy County Administrator, announced the Group’s regular meeting facilitator, Dr. Bob Lee, was unable to be present.

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 17, 2019 MINUTES

Mr. Flores advised the September 17, 2019 minutes would be submitted for approval at a future meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were none.

SALES TAX PROJECTS

South County Annex Replacement

Mr. Roger Warner, Facilities Manager, stated the existing structure was a 21,000 square foot facility located on Taylor Street in Punta Gorda, currently at the end of its life cycle. He noted the replacement was planned as an approximately 30,000 square foot modern and code compliant facility which housed various Charlotte County agencies and provided support to citizens County-wide, including a properly sized parking lot. He concluded construction and operating costs were projected to be \$9,750,000 and \$57,426, respectively.

Mr. Schafer asked if the projected operating costs represented an increase or decrease. Mr. Warner replied the former.

Mr. Schafer opined operating costs would decrease with a new structure, requesting staff research the dollar amount of the increase.

In response to a comment regarding past discussions of turning the current Public Works campus into the annex or even combining the two, Mr. Warner explained the Public Works portion was a separate project.

Mr. Travis Mortimer, Assistant County Administrator, clarified the project's intent was similar to that done in West County with 2014 sales tax funds, specifically creating a purpose-built location for consolidated services.

Mr. Presley opined the proposed construction did not represent the most efficient use of the site nor would it satisfy the community's needs very far into the future.

Mr. Mortimer responded this and other projects were developed out of the County's capital needs assessments, adding this was an identified need. He acknowledged this might not be the most ideal location, thus the basis for presenting such proposals to the Group.

Discussion ensued regarding future expansion needs.

Mr. Mortimer confirmed the Supervisor of Elections (SOE) did not occupy an office in the South County Annex but rather operated a small area in the Administration building with part-time hours for citizens' access.

Ms. Barrett asked if any revenue was derived through use of these types of locations by various agencies.

Mr. Mortimer replied in the negative.

Mr. Green urged the County to coordinate with the City of Punta Gorda as road work was set to begin on Virginia Avenue.

Note: Ms. Aho left the meeting at 3:31 p.m.

Supervisor of Elections Building

Mr. Mortimer stated the Facility Space Master Plan suggested consideration be given to consolidation of the SOE Warehouse and their administrative functions into a single, new location; however, Mr. Paul Stamoulis, Supervisor, had expressed his desire to remain in the old Courthouse. He summarized County staff was not urging forward movement on this project, recommending a score of "zero (0)".

Mr. Warner briefly reviewed the details of this project, as delineated in the agenda material, stating projected construction and operating costs were \$4,750,000 and \$39,732, respectively.

Mr. Presley acknowledged the current SOE's wishes, noting Mr. Stamoulis was a very active Supervisor; however, a fair amount of staff time had been expended on this project regardless. He asked if sufficient time existed to study the SOE Warehouse alone as the current site was prone to flooding, which was detrimental to any storage facility.

Mr. Warner explained the SOE Warehouse was not used for actual file storage but rather for election equipment.

Mr. Mortimer displayed an overhead view of the subject location, stating the existing facility would require demolition and new space found for the SOE. He estimated space could be found for far less than this project's overall cost.

Ms. Matthews pointed out the 2020 sales tax was estimated to be in place for six years while Mr. Stamoulis' position as Supervisor was subject to election. She clarified the latter should be part of the abovementioned considerations.

Mr. Mortimer stated the old Courthouse was functional, not obsolete in any way, but would require work to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. He opined replacement of the SOE offices with other uses could result in much costlier work.

Ms. Matthews clarified there were no plans to build a new facility at the site of the existing SOE Warehouse.

Ms. Barrett expressed opposition to relocating the SOE offices in the interest of time efficiency as polling staff from all over the County were required to return to those offices on election nights.

Former Punta Gorda Library Renovation

Mr. Warner stated this project encompassed the repurposing of the old Punta Gorda Library, projecting construction costs at \$500,000 and operating costs at \$36,340. He mentioned the latter costs represented no increase.

Mr. Schafer stated he saw no reason for the County to retain this property, suggesting the structure be demolished and the land sold or turned over to the City of Punta Gorda.

Mr. Mortimer advised the County had identified this parcel as surplus and did not have a current need for the square footage at this location, adding a search had been conducted for any interested parties. He mentioned a non-profit group had expressed interest in the site, albeit at the County's ongoing cost.

Ms. Matthews spoke on behalf of the City Council of the City of Punta Gorda, confirming the City did not wish to take ownership of the building. She stated several groups had expressed interest in utilization of the site, citing three stakeholder groups as follows: senior meeting facility; cultural heritage tourism center; the historic group previously located on Bayshore Drive. She explained each expressed willingness to lease the facility and assume responsibility for operational costs. She stated the City Council issued a letter of support for the latter to the Board of Charlotte County Commissioners approximately one year earlier; however, there had been no further movement.

Discussion ensued regarding the depreciated value of the structure.

Mr. Presley recommended "zeroing out" this project as there was no solution in place beyond expending \$500,000.

Mr. Rebol commented many structures of this age could be updated and leased to various users; however, this was typically seen in private as opposed to government sectors.

Mr. Wright questioned the property's current zoning.

Mr. Mortimer replied he believe the land was zoned Public (P).

Mr. Wright stated zoning restrictions should be researched before moving forward.

Mr. Schafer opined non-profit groups would not be able to pay the projected operating costs. He reiterated his belief the property should be sold.

Mr. Green pointed out the structure might not be able to withstand use by certain community groups.

Mr. Presley clarified he was not opposed to non-profit groups as a whole; however, he was concerned with the County acting as a landlord due to liability issues.

Mr. Mortimer noted the projected operating costs of approximately \$36,000 were for basics such as mowing and air-conditioning but did not cover costs if the building was being actively used.

Family Services Center: Phase 2

Ms. Carrie Walsh, Human Services Director, provided a brief historical background of the Family Services Center (FSC) project, which began with 2014 sales tax funding, stating the goal was to have non-profit agencies working side by side with Charlotte County government for a true public-private partnership. She announced Phase 1 was currently in the design stage, stating a permanent youth services building was planned as part of Phase 2.

Mr. Vieira clarified the intention was to consolidate services into one location, particularly to help those who were transportation-challenged.

Ms. Walsh agreed, listing services such as veterans, senior, neighborhood and jail re-entry as examples. She provided a project recap for Phases 1 and 2 and displayed an artist's rendering of a facility to hopefully be located on six-acres currently owned in the Parkside Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) community.

Ms. Barrett expressed strong support for the help provided by Human Services.

Discussion ensued regarding coordination between Human Services and the Charlotte County Cultural Center.

Ms. Orr commented the dynamics of the Parkside CRA area was changing, stating there were more early retirees than in the past. She acknowledged the work done by Human Services; however, she opined continually populating an area with needy people would cause problems. She suggested the FSC should not be located in a residential area but rather somewhere closer to U.S. 41.

Ms. Walsh countered 45% of the Parkside CRA community was financially unstable, adding the FSC's goal was to help families become self-sufficient.

Mr. Green asked if any of the needs were defined as capital.

Ms. Walsh replied the goal was to provide space for service-oriented non-profits to coordinate their services.

Discussion ensued regarding specific services to hopefully be provided at the FSC such as community garden, commercial cooking, etc.

FOCUS GROUP MEMBER SCORING

Mr. Flores provided members with several minutes to complete their project scoring, reminding everyone the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, October 9, 2-019.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Kelly